

## Message Text

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41

ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W  
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P 241315Z JAN 76

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8311

INFO AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS PRIORITY

C N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 0772

EXDIS

E.O."711652: XGDS-2

TAGS: PFOR, PDIP, LE, SY

SUBJECT: POSSIBLE EXCHANGE OF DIPLOMATIC MISSIONS BETWEEN LEBANON  
AND SYRIA

### 1. WITH SYRIAN-SPONSORED SETTLEMENT OF LEBANON'S PROLONGED

CRISIS OFF TO GOOD START, PARTICULARLY ON IMMEDIATE  
PROBLEM OF ENDING ENDEMIC CIVIL STRIFE, WE HAVE BEEN  
CONSIDERING INGREDIENTS WHICH MIGHT GO INTO VIABLE AND  
LASTING SOLUTION. IT OCCURS TO US THAT DECISION TO  
EXCHANGE AMBASSADORS AND/OD OTHER DIPLOMATIC REPRESENTA-  
TIVES BETWEEN BEIRUT AND DAMASCUS IS ELEMENT WHICH MIGHT  
BE CONSTRUCTIVE.

2. SYRIANS ARE, OF COURSE, AWARE OF ANXIETY MOST  
LEBANESE CHRISTIANS AND MANY MOSLEMS CONCERNING  
ANOMALOUS STATE OF SYRIAN-LEBANESE RELATRONSHIP AND  
PERSISTING CONCERN THAT SYRIA MIGHT DECIDE AT SOME  
POINT TO EXERCISE ITS HISTORICAL CLAIM TO ALL OR PART  
OF LEBANESE TERRITORY. ISRAELIS AS WELL, ACCORDING  
TO OUR UNDERSTANDING, SHARE THIS VAGUE CONCERN. RECENT  
EVENTS, INCLUDING SYRIAN FORMIN KHADDAM'S STATEMENT ON  
THIS SUBJECT IN KUWAIT, HAVE EXACERBATED SUCH CHRISTIAN  
FEARS. WE UNDERSTAND THAT MANY CHRISTIANS ARE APPREHENSIVE  
AT EXTENT OF SYRIAN INFLUENCE AND INCREASE (HOWEVER  
TEMPORARY IT MIGHT TURN OUT TO BE) TF ACTUAL SYRIAN  
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MILITARY PRESENCE TO ARRANGE AND IMPLEMENT SOLUTION TO

LEBANESE CRISIS. WE BELIEVE PARTIAL ANTIDOTE WOULD BE INTRODUCED INTO CURRENT SITUATION IF SYRIA, IN CONSULTATION WITH GOL, WERE TO ANNOUNCE DECISION TO ACCREDIT AMBASSADOR OR OTHER PERMANENT DIPLOMATIC REPRESENTATIVE TO LEBANESE CAPITAL. IT WOULD ALSO PROVIDE CONTINUING ACCEPTABLE SYRIAN PRESENCE HERE ONCE KHADDAM, SHEHABI, AND JAMIL ARE EVENTUALLY FORCED TO TURN THEIR ATTENTION ELSEWHERE.

3. BILATERALLY, SARG WILLINGNESS SYMBOLICALLY TO ABANDON (OR AT LEAST SHELVE) SYRIA'S DORMANT CLAIM TO LEBANESE TERRITORY WOULD PROVIDE GOL WITH NEW DOSE OF PRESTIGE AND STATURE WHICH IT SORELY NEEDS AT PRESENT JUNCTURE.

4. THIS ACT OF RECOGNITION, LONG-DELAYED, COULD ALSO SERVE AS SIGNAL TO PALESTINIANS IN LEBANON OF VALUE SYRIA PLACES ON VIABILITY AND INTEGRITY OF LEBANESE STATE.

5. SO FAR AS WE CAN DETERMINE, POSSIBILITY OF DIPLOMATIC EXCHANGE IS NOT RPT NOT UNDER ACTIVE CONSIDERATION IN ANY QUARTER AT PRESENT. EMBASSY DAMASCUS IS BETTER PLACED THAN WE TO COMMENT UPON SYRIAN RECEPTIVITY TO IDEA AT THIS TIME. NEVERTHELESS, SARG MIGHT BE MORE WILLING TO CONSIDER TAKING THIS STEP AT TIME WHEN ITS INFLUENCE HERE IS RISING, RATHER THAN FALLING, AND WHEN PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT WOULD NOT RPT NOT INVOLVE REAL SACRIFICE RE ITS ESSENTIAL ROLE IN LEBANON.

6. RECOMMEND DEPARTMENT AUTHORIZE DAMASCUS TO FEED THIS IDEA TO SYRIANS IN APPROPRIATE WAY.  
LAMBRAKIS

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